Argentina

Location

The nation of Argentina is located in South America and covers more than one million square acres. It is the second largest nation in Latin America, only being exceeded by Brazil in area. Argentina lies between 21°S and 55°S latitude and measures 2,175 miles long. At its greatest width Argentina is 870 miles wide. It is bordered to the west and south by Chile, to the north by Bolivia and Paraguay. The eastern boarder is shared with Brazil, Uruguay, and the Atlantic Ocean. Argentina also has claim to a portion of Antarctica, which is only 700 miles to the south. As well as several islands in the South Atlantic Ocean.

Geography

In the west, the crest of the Andes Mountains make up the border with Chile and from here the landscape slopes downward to the Atlantic Ocean. The highest point in Argentina and South America is Mount Aconcagua, which is 22,831 feet high.

Because of the vast length of Argentina the geography of the country varies greatly. It is normally divided into four topographical regions: the Pampas (Plains), Patagonia, the Andes and their foothills, and the Northeast. A quarter of the total land area is part of the flat, fertile Pampas of east and central Argentina. This region is divided into the eastern, humid Pampas, and the dry pampas to the west. South of the Pampas region is Patagonia, which consists of arid, windy plateaus. The Andes Region also varies as you go from the north to the south. The northern Andes are high and...
arid, whereas the southern Andes are low and glaciated. The final region is the
Northwest region. This region makes up one-fifth of Argentina. The area is made up of
extensive subtropical pine forests and fertile plains of Mesopotamia and the Gran
Chaco, a scrub woodland mixed with grassy savannas.

The Paraguay and the Parana rivers, which originate in the Central Plateau of
Brazil, drain the Northeast. Also in the north is the Uruguay River. These three rivers
join together to form an estuary between Argentina and Uruguay. The most important
rivers in the central and southern Argentina are the Colorado, Negro, Chubut, Deseado,
Chico, and Santa Cruz.

**Climate**

Most of Argentina’s weather is moderate, although there is considerable
variation, from the extreme heat of the northern Chaco (with an average temperature of
74°F at least 14 days a year of 113°F temperatures), to central Pampas were the
average temperature is 60°F. Farther south the cool, windy, and dry climate of
Patagonia turns into glacial cold at higher altitudes in the Andes. The winter (May to
August) is the driest part of the year for the northern two-thirds of the country. Rainfall
diminishes from east to west and toward the south, with about 80 inches a year in
Misiones, 37 inches in Buenos Aires, 10 inches in Patagonia, and only two inches in the
far west and northwest of the country.
History

The first European set foot in Argentina in 1516. And until 1816 Argentina was predominantly under Spanish rule. On July 9, 1816, the Proclamation of Independence was signed at Tucuman. Independence was followed by years of civil war. In 1945 Argentina declared war against Germany. In 1946 Juan D. Peron was elected president and with the help of his wife Eva he developed policies of rapid industrial expansion and markedly increased benefits. However, these policies led to social and economic problems, and in 1955, Peron was forced from office. Years of civil unrest followed. In 1982 Argentina unsuccessfully fought Great Britain over possession of the Falkland Islands. This was followed by a period of economic crisis, with annual inflation rates above 1000%. Economic and civil unrest continued until 1989 when Carlos Saul Menem handily won the presidency. By 1993, his anti-inflationary measures succeeded, and the economy and stock market rebounded. In 1994 the 141-year-old constitution was rewritten, similar to that of the United States. Menem sought and won re-election in 1995.

Important Dates

Important dates on Argentina’s calendar are January 1 – New Year’s Day, April 12 – Maundy Tuesday, April 13 – Good Friday, April 16 – Easter Monday, May 1 – Labor Day, May 25 – National Day, June 10 – Malvinas Day,

June 10 – National Flag Day, July 9 – Independence Day, August 16 – Death of General Jose’ de San Martin, October 15 – Day of the Americas,

December 8 – Immaculate Conception, and December 25 – Christmas Day.
**Population**

The population of Argentina in 1998 was approximately 36 million people. Today only three percent of the population are Indians and mestizos (mixed). The rest are of European descent. The population density is 32.6 persons per square mile, which is one of the lowest in Latin America. (Compton’s, CD 1997). Even with the low population density, Argentina is one of the most urbanized countries in the western hemisphere with 88% of the population living in urban areas. The average population growth is 1.3%. Argentineans have an average life expectancy of about 70 years. The country has decreased its death rate among children which followed the same decreasing tendency as the general public.

**Currency**

The official currency of Argentina is the Paso. 1 Paso equals 100 centavos. Peso notes are in denominations of P100, 50, 20, 10, 5, and 2. Coins are in denominations of P1, and 50, 25, 10, 5, and 1 centavo. The current (’01) exchange rate is $1.00 = £1.

**Education**

Schooling in Argentina is free and compulsory, which ensures that most of the people attend elementary school. Many then enter into secondary schools but few graduate. Since most people have some schooling, Argentina’s literacy rate is greater than 90%. There are 26 National Universities and about as many Private Universities in
the country. The University of Buenos Aires is the largest in Latin America with 105,000 students.

**Language**

The official language of Argentina is Spanish, but it is a distinctive Argentine Spanish. It is characterized by expressions and pronunciations that have evolved for more than 350 years. The dialect called Spanish Lunfardo has many words that are borrowed from Italian and Portuguese. There are also many native languages spoken.

**Religion**

The Official religion of Argentina is Roman Catholic with over 90% of the population practicing. The freedom to choose your own religion is guaranteed by the Constitution, but the President and the Vice President must belong to the Catholic Church.

**Agriculture**

Argentina ranks among the world’s top producers of wheat, rye, corn, and linseed as well as beef. Nearly 60% of Argentina’s land is used for agriculture. Most farms are privately owned and there are very few tenant farmers. Wheat is the chief crop and occupies one-seventh of the nation’s cropland and is raised mainly in the Pampas region.

Today Argentina is a world leader in raising livestock. In the 1988 Livestock National Census there were 75 million head of cattle, sheep, swine, and horses. Sixty percent of these were cattle and another thirty percent were sheep. Eighty percent of
the beef cattle are concentrated in the Pampas region. The main breeds of cattle are Angus, Hereford, Charolais, Shorthorn, and various crosses. Sheep are also extensively raised throughout Argentina and 90% of the sheep raised are intended for domestic consumption.

**Trade**

Half of the foreign trade volume is carried out with the US, Brazil, Germany, and Italy. Ninety percent of Argentina’s exports are made up of crops, especially wheat, and livestock products. Vegetable and animal raw material accounted for one third of the export volume.

Argentina imports are mainly focused on machinery, mechanical, and electronic appliances, and devices. The largest quantities of imports come from the United States. Other major countries that Argentina imports from are Germany, Great Britain, Venezuela, and Brazil.

**Food**

Local food consists largely of a mixture of Basque, Spanish, and Italian cuisine. Popular dishes include *empanadas*, which is minced meat and other ingredients covered with puff pastry, and *locro*, a pork and maize stew. Beef in Argentina is of very high quality and the average consumption of meat is 132 pounds per person.

Argentinean wines are very good and inexpensive. Local distilleries produce name brands of most well known sprits.
**Landmarks**

There are numerous sites to visit and tour while in Argentina. The capital of Argentina is Buenos Aires which must be visited while in Argentina. The town of Capilla del Senor can be visited on a day trip with an old historic steam train. Mar Del Plata is located 250 miles from Buenos Aires and it is one of the main tourist resorts on the Atlantic Coast. Lihu Calel National Park, an area consisting mostly of desert, is located southwest of Santa Rosa, and is known for its beautiful pink granite rock formation reaching heights up to 1900 feet high. Another must-see are the Iguacu Falls. The falls are located on the Iquacu River between Argentina and Brazil and are made up of 275 cataracts that fall 200 to 280 feet, over the edge of a 2.5-mile escarpment. These are just a few of the many sites to see while in Argentina. With over one million square acres it is almost impossible to see it all.

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